3

THE NEW YORK TIMES
15 January, 1985

Ex-C.I.A. Analyst Says Westmoreland's Actions Cost Thousands of Lives

A 1

By M.A. FARBER

Samuel A. Adams yesterday accused Gen. William C. Westmoreland of taking actions that, in effect, cost the lives of thousands of American soldiers.

Mr. Adams is a former Central Intelligence Agency analyst whose charge of military "deception" regarding enemy strength in South Vietnam underlies a disputed CBS documentary. Testifying in Federal District Court at the trial of the general's $120-million libel suit against CBS, Mr. Adams recalled visiting the Vietnam War memorial in Washington and reflecting on the dead.

"I asked myself, as an analyst," he said, "how many of the 45,000 who were on those slabs were killed, probably, by people not listed in the official order of battle for the enemy. At least one-third, maybe one-half."

In 1967 — as part of what Mr. Adams and CBS have called a "conspiracy" to minimize the might of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong — General Westmoreland ordered the removal of the part-time, hamlet-based self-defense forces from the listing of enemy strength known as the order of battle. According to the 1982 documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," he imposed an "arbitrary" ceiling of 300,000 on reports of the size of enemy forces.

No Offensive Capability

General Westmoreland, who commanded American troops in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968, has denied setting a ceiling, arbitrary or otherwise, on the order of battle. He also testified that he deleted the Vietnamese self-defense forces — newly estimated in late 1967 at approximately 120,000 — because they had no offensive military capability and their inclusion in the order of battle at twice their previous number would have misled the press and Government officials.

Yesterday, under questioning by David Boies, a CBS lawyer, Mr. Adams said that if the enemy had been listed at the half-million or more that he and some C.I.A. colleagues advocated in 1967, rather than at the figure of 298,000 insisted upon by the military, that the toll of American casualties might have been significantly lessened.

Q. What was at stake in this battle between the C.I.A. and the military over enemy strength?

A. At stake, basically, was our policy in Vietnam. If the enemy was twice as big, we had to do something to change our policy. We could have mobilized our forces to try to fight, or we could have withdrawn. I remember all the people being killed while we were playing with numbers on the seventh floor of C.I.A. headquarters. The G.I.'s stepping on booby traps and mines. These kids who were fighting the war. That's what I was concerned about.

Mr. Adams, who resigned from the C.I.A. in 1973 because of what he described as "dishonest appraisals" of enemy strength by "American intelligence," served as a paid consultant to CBS for the broadcast on Vietnam. He is a defendant at this trial before Judge Pierre N. Leval, as is George Crile, the producer of the documentary, and Mike Wallace, its narrator. Mr. Wallace, who was recently hospitalized for what his doctors termed exhaustion, returned to court yesterday.

Mr. Adams, who is 51, had advanced his thesis of deception privately within Government circles before making it public in an article in Harper's magazine in 1975. The article was edited by George Crile, who worked for the magazine before becoming a CBS producer in 1976.

The scope of Mr. Adams's contribution to the broadcast was underscored yesterday when the witness recalled interviewing one former military analyst 20 or 30 times — "a whole mess of times" — ferreting out and becoming close friends with other former officers long before the documentary was prepared in 1981 and reading "scores of books" and "winding this little crank" on a microfilm machine at the Library of Congress "for about two months."

The 90-minute documentary — which was played in its entirety for the jury yesterday for the first time in this 14-week-old trial — alleged a "conspiracy" by General Westmoreland's command to show progress in the war by suppressing and altering "critical intelligence on the enemy in the year leading up to the Tet offensive" of January 1968. As a result, it said, President Johnson and the American troops were caught "totally unprepared."

General Westmoreland, who contends that the documentary falsely accused him of lying to the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the composition and size of enemy forces, sat impassively at the plaintiff's table as Mr. Adams testified about the formation of his belief that sound intelligence had been made subservient to political concerns in 1967.

Mr. Adams, who will be cross-examined by General Westmoreland's lawyers when court resumes tomorrow, said he was "satisfied" with the documentary and particularly with the "extremely careful" labors of Mr. Crile.

'Massive Falsification'

"I was satisfied," he said, "in the sense that it portrayed accurately in my view what I thought was the massive falsification of statistics, order-of-battle statistics. It also portrayed accurately information which I had gotten concerning the laying on of a ceiling by General Westmoreland in early August 1967, and it has always been my feeling that it was the laying on of the ceiling from which all of the other events came in train."

Mr. Adams, who appeared on the CBS broadcast, also said he was convinced of its importance, "with the fact that it was covering a key event in the Vietnam War. It demonstrated to me, and I thought it demonstrated as well to anyone who looked at it, how politics could affect intelligence.

"We, in intelligence," he said, "had tried to fool the American public, we tried to fool the Congress and even to some extent the Administration, but we ended up, I think, in fooling ourselves. I thought the documentary explained, at least in part, how we managed to lose this war."

Still, Mr. Adams told the jury, the documentary was not "the end of the story."

"I felt that there may have been political pressures on General Westmoreland to come up with the things he came up with," to "come up with good news" for Washington, the witness said. But the general and others denied that, he continued, "so basically we went with what we had."

2

No Regrets

After Mr. Adams said he had no regrets "whatsoever" about taking part in the broadcast, Mr. Boies raised a charge by Dan M. Burt, General Westmoreland's lawyer, that Mr. Adams was "obsessed."

"We lost a war in Vietnam," Mr. Adams replied. "There's never been an adequate investigation of how we managed to do it. We're a great big country and Vietnam is a little bitty country. I don't think it's enough to say the press did it."

Mr. Adams was somewhat less tough on the C.I.A. than he was on the military in his testimony. He said he had agreed in 1967 with the view of George V. Allen, a colleague, that the C.I.A. had "sold out" to the military on enemy strength estimates. And he recalled how, as early as 1969, he took copies of order-of-battle documents from the C.I.A. and buried them on a Virginia farm because he "was scared that perhaps this kind of record might disappear."

But, in the end, Mr. Adams's often-expressed affection for the C.I.A. shone through.

Q. If you had to do it all over again, would you still join the C.I.A.?

A. Yup.